



A hand with orange markings on the palm, positioned over a map of South Asia. The markings appear to be a stylized representation of a network or a specific region. The map shows countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, with labels in Hindi and English. The hand is in the foreground, and the map is in the background.

# Vertically Synchronizing Operational Contract Support

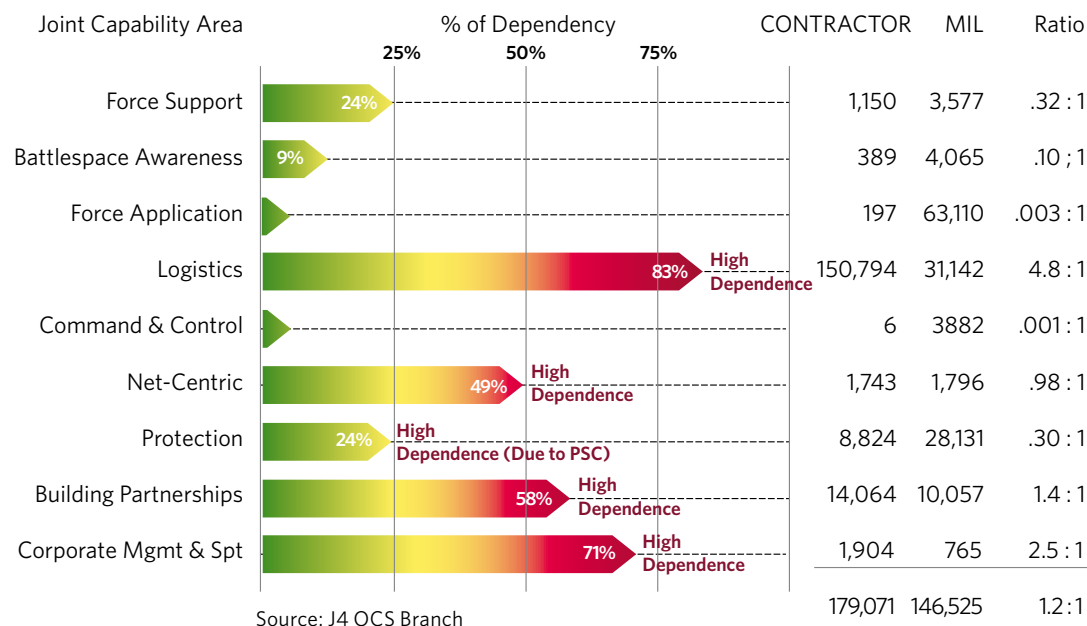
*Col. Ed Keller, USAF*

**T**he Department of Defense's reliance on contractors for the conduct of contingency operations can best be described as significant. In fact, in Iraq and Afghanistan the contractor population constituted more than 50 percent of the total in-theater force, with activities spanning a broad range of support operations including base-camp support, logistics (to include warehousing, transportation, and distribution), interpreters, advisory and assistance services, training, engineering, and construction (See Fig. 1). The financial resources required to assemble this force are impressive. The trends that drove this increased reliance, including the reduction in organic capabilities, force cap restrictions, and increasing complexity (and aging) of weapon systems, show no signs of abating in this era of declining budgets. This fact compels

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**Figure 1. Contractor Dependency (OIF as of 2008).**



(Joint Publication 4-10), improved training and education, establishment of two new Army contracting commands, and emergence of a burgeoning OCS Community of Interest, led by the deputy assistant secretary of Defense for program support (DASD (PS)) and the Joint Staff J4 intent on establishing, improving and institutionalizing OCS. The response also included the establishment of the

the Department to continually pursue more effective planning and execution of operational contract support (OCS).

To be sure, contractors are a definitive force multiplier, enabling a flexible response to meet emerging requirements in dynamic operations. In addition to the relative speed and flexibility of the contracted workforce, leadership increasingly recognizes the strategic importance of contracting to the achievement of broader economic objectives such as increased indigenous employment and financial activity. However, as documented by a number of commissions, boards, inspectors general, and auditors, many problems accompanied the execution of contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. DoD was clearly unprepared for the up-front planning required to determine requirements and deconflict them among the Services.

There also were few policies in place to govern the oversight and management of such a large contractor force once they were on the ground. This includes policies addressing personnel and legal accountability, communications, and standards of contractor support (encompassing medical support, security, and housing). As the steady drumbeat of lessons learned, audits, and commission reports continued, focusing attention on more and more examples of mismanagement, inefficiencies and fraud investigations, the requirement for change became apparent. This drove the passage of the FY07-FY09 National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA) directing the Department to establish a more robust OCS capability from OSD and Joint Staff through the combatant commands (COCOMs) to the components and services.

The Department's comprehensive response to these legislative mandates included the establishment of additional OCS planners at the COCOMs, approval of an OCS doctrine

Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office (JCASO) chartered to "orchestrate, synchronize, and integrate program management of contingency acquisitions across COCOMs and other U.S. government agencies during combat and post-conflict operations."

JCASO was provisionally established at the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) in July 2008, permanently established at DLA in August 2009, and reached fully staffing and operational capability in 2010. Its stated mission is to provide strategic and operational level OCS program management for combatant commanders (CCDRs) on behalf of DoD, including whole-of-government matters. When requested by the CCDR, JCASO provides an OCS enabling capability during contingencies to assist the CCDR in planning, organizing, staffing, controlling and leading OCS efforts required to effectively and efficiently meet joint force commander objectives. To perform this mission, JCASO relies on OCS planners located at each of the geographic COCOMs and on a centralized staff, established as part of the DLA Acquisition Directorate (J7) at Fort Belvoir, Va. (See Fig. 2)

DASD (PS) established the OCS planners at the COCOMs via contract in September 2007. They have since been converted to civil service and placed within JCASO. The planner's primary responsibility is to integrate OCS into operational plans during Phase 0. This includes reviewing the OCS plans of other DoD agencies and multi-national partners within the COCOM's operational areas. Clearly, this is far easier said than done, as the DoD planning culture has historically been focused on combat operations in early phases of operations, relegating OCS to an afterthought. However, the diligent efforts of OCS planners both past and present, combined with unrelenting congressional pressure, is slowly turning the tide

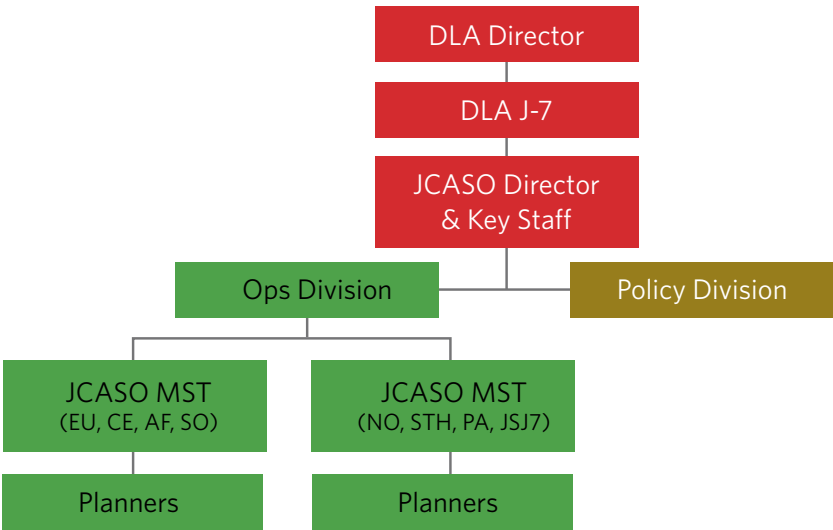


on this thinking and enlarging the profile of OCS in operational planning, exercises, and contingencies.

The planners, though embedded and under the tactical control of their respective COCOM staffs, report to one of two mission support teams (MSTs) located at JCASO HQs in Fort Belvoir. These multifunctional teams include active and reserve military personnel experienced in various disciplines relevant to OCS to include contingency contracting, engineering, logistics planning, program management, quality assurance and administrative mission support. The MSTs focus on supporting the COCOM's OCS efforts during all operational phases but, initially, have placed particular emphasis on contingency operations in Phases I-V when the MSTs deploy, at the COCOM's request, to provide the OCS "enabling capability" described above. During contingencies, the MSTs perform tasks, at both the COCOM and JTF levels, such as aiding in the establishment of command and control (C2) relationships between the COCOMs and service component contracting activities, doctrinally mandated boards, centers, and cells to manage the acquisition process and enabling the dissemination of commander's OCS-related guidance addressing such matters as theater business clearance, private security contractors and contracting officer representatives.

As a result of this emphasis on contingency operations, the MST's Phase 0 COCOM engagement usually focuses on planning and participating in exercises aimed at developing trust between JCASO HQs and its COCOM counterparts while gaining proficiencies in managing and synchronizing the OCS function in the contingency environment. In the meantime, JCASO's Policy Division, comprising procurement, interagency contract administration and policy expertise, focuses on supporting the MSTs as required while maintaining engagement with the broader OCS Community of Interest (COI), particularly OSD and the Joint Staff J-4.

Figure 2. JCASO Organizational Chart



Source: JCASO

**As the steady drumbeat of lessons learned, audits, and commission reports continued, focusing attention on more and more examples of mismanagement, inefficiencies and fraud investigations, the requirement for change became apparent.**

While JCASO remains engaged in preparing for Phases I-V, its approach to providing Phase 0 support has evolved from the largely COCOM staff augmentation function with strong emphasis on exercise participation described above into an active "vertical" approach of productively engaging the OCS COI at all levels to produce tangible benefits for operational forces now. This involves enabling and advising the COCOMs, components and contracting activities as they execute OCS worldwide while simultaneously participating in the development of policy, doctrine and other OCS enablers with OSD and JS. The jointly staffed MSTs, with "deep dive" analytical support from JCASO's Policy Division, regularly engage the COCOMs and components on OCS matters related to policy, staffing, organizational options, component and service coordination, collection and analysis of lessons learned, and exercise engagement. The information gleaned from these operational level activities continuously circulates back to fuel JCASO's contributions to OSD and JS-led policy and doctrine reviews.

As an extension of this approach, JCASO HQs also leverages its organizational proximity to OSD, JS, the COCOMs and Services to, upon request, develop and test OCS resources and tools or perform functions vital to the maturation of OCS as an operational capability. In doing so, it helps fulfill the DoD's intentions to establish effective processes and tools for managing contracts within an operational

battlespace. For example, JCASO recently completed a Lead Service for Contracting (LSC) Guide, detailing the responsibilities of a lead service by operational phase (O-V), complete with links to governing authorities and best practices. It then utilized and validated the Guide during both the PANAMAX and Ulchi-Freedom Guardian exercises. In many ways, the LSC Guide project typifies JCASO's active "vertical" approach. Through its implementation, JCASO provides benefits at all levels of the OCS COI; the Service components receive a valuable tool to aid their preparation for a potential role as a LSC; the COCOMs benefit from a better prepared, more effective lead service; and the Joint Staff receives more in-depth, operationally vetted information for possible inclusion into doctrine or other authoritative documents.

This evolving "vertical" engagement approach during Phase O greatly enhances JCASO's effectiveness when deployed during Phases I-V in support of COCOM requirements by providing a stronger team dynamic and a richer, more contextual knowledge base than can be obtained via the previous staff augmentation, exercise-focused model. JCASO has been developing a symbiotic partnership with the COCOMs by routinely conducting deep-dive analysis on OCS matters, remaining engaged and current on COCOM operational issues, producing OCS solutions addressing current operations challenges, and synchronizing the COCOMs, components, and contracting activities to meet Phase O requirements. Together, they forge their combined team in the fires of real-world

trials and, thereby, adeptly prepare for the rapidly developing challenges inherent in the contingency environment. When coupled with the teamwork acquired during COCOM exercises (still an important aspect of JCASO's mission), this hard-earned team chemistry is further honed by "game day" conditions, increasing theater-specific shared knowledge while solidifying trust and working relationships between JCASO and COCOM staffs. This creates an unassailable team partnered to effectively plan and execute OCS, building on the lessons of the past to more effectively address the challenges of the future.

As a new organization, JCASO's journey from the broad vision established at its inception to its development as a key integrator delivering real-world solutions will continue to adapt and adjust in response to the emerging requirements of the OCS COI. However, in the long run, JCASO's persistent, simultaneous "vertical" engagement, adjoined to the intent of OSD and the Joint Staff, will increasingly focus DoD's disparate OCS efforts into a critical mass well-positioned for integration ever deeper into operational planning, preparation and execution. With origins rooted in the emergence of OCS as a vital national security issue, organizational proximity to OSD, the Joint Staff and COCOMs, and emerging partnerships with the service contracting activities, JCASO is and should remain well-situated to serve as an organizing framework for focused, results-driven execution of the global OCS mission. &

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